

DEBUSSY

24 PRÉLUDES
1^{ER} LIVRE & 2^{ME} LIVRE
ANKER BLYME · PIANO



Jana
cord

Claude Debussy (1862 - 1918)

24 Préludes pour Piano

1er Livre (1910)

- [1] 1. Lent et grave 3:11
(... Danseuses de Delphes)
- [2] 2. Modéré 3:25
(... Voiles)
- [3] 3. Animé 2:16
(... Le vent dans la plaine)
- [4] 4. Modéré 3:07
(... "Les sons et les parfumes tournent dans l'air du soir" Ch. Baudelaire)
- [5] 5. Très modéré 3:01
(... Les collines d'Anacapri)
- [6] 6. Triste et lent 3:29
(... Des pas sur la neige)
- [7] 7. Animé et tumultueux 3:37
(... Ce qu'à vu le vent d'Ouest)
- [8] 8. Très calme et doucement expressif 2:25
(... La fille aux cheveux de lin)
- [9] 9. Modérément animé 2:23
(... La sérénade interrompue)
- [10] 10. Profondément calme 5:52
(... La Cathédrale engloutie)
- [11] 11. Capricieuse et léger 2:53
(... La danse de Puck)
- [12] 12. Modéré 2:10
(... Minstrels)

2me Livre (1913)

- [13] 1. Modéré 2:35
(... Brouillards)
- [14] 2. Lent et mélancolique 2:39
(... Feuilles mortes)
- [15] 3. Mouvement de Habanera 2:37
(... La puerta del Vino)
- [16] 4. Rapide et léger 3:03
(... "Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses")
- [17] 5. Calme - Doucement expressif 2:31
(... Bruyères)
- [18] 6. Dans le style et le Mouvement d'un Cake-Walk 2:22
(... "General Lavine" - eccentric -)
- [19] 7. Lent 3:53
(... La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune)
- [20] 8. Scherzando 3:01
(... Ondine)
- [21] 9. Grave 2:32
(... Hommage à S. Pickwick Esq. P.P.M.P.C.)
- [22] 10. Très calme et doucement triste 2:47
(... Canope)
- [23] 11. Modérément animé 2:33
(... Les tierces alternées)
- [24] 12. Modérément animé 3:56
(... Feux d'artifice)

Anker Blyme, Piano

"Musicien français" - that is how **Claude Debussy** liked to describe himself. But the term "impressionism" was attached to his music even during his own lifetime, and in the meantime he has come to be regarded as the leading exponent of the impressionist movement in music. In fact, it may be justifiable to doubt whether there ever *has* been an impressionist movement as such in the world of music. Debussy had few imitators, and hardly any of real substance, even though it can be argued that his advances in harmony and instrumentation have been of importance for the film and light music of later generations.

The term impressionism originated in the art of painting and refers, popularly stated, to the idea of the artist reproducing not his motif itself but the impression the motif has had on him. Hence the vague, unoutlined, even shimmering effect of so-called impressionist painting. Similarly, Debussy attempts in some of his works to convey his impression of nature: "Clouds", "The Sea" and "Moonlight" are typical of the titles of his works, and he called his greatest orchestral piece "Images", which may be translated as "Reflections". He incidentally also used this title for a number of his works for piano.

In order to achieve what have been described as impressionistic effects in his music, Debussy departed from conventional, classical-romantic functional harmony, according to which the individual harmonies are related to each other and progress in a pattern determined by western music's need of tension and subsequent relaxation. Debussy accorded each harmony its own worth, thereby creating a world of harmony free of tension and suggestive of things motion-

less and unoutlined. He also tried to avoid the diatonic scales, replacing them with the whole-tone scale which is free of the semitones which characterize the major and minor (diatonic) scales. Far from all of Debussy's works can however be described as impressionistic. Much of his work is marked by his affinity for the French musical past: he was a great admirer of the French "clavecinistes", composers such as Couperin and Rameau, and many of his piano pieces are archaic to some extent. In their works we find rhythmically vital and melodically bright music, built upon the functional harmony of earlier ages, and the names of the movements are those of the baroque suite.

Préludes

Ever since Johann Sebastian Bach wrote his 24 Preludes and Fugues in celebration of the then new equal temperament, which made it possible to play in all 24 major and minor keys on the keyboard, composers have been tempted to emulate him. Bach himself wrote a second set of 24 Preludes and Fugues in all the different keys, and in our own century Shostakovich and Niels Viggo Bentzon among many others have done the same. In romantic music, however, interest in the fugue varied, and it became the norm to content oneself with writing preludes: short, single-movement character pieces, and often of a sentimental character compared to the taut, architectural structure and more abstract emotional content of the classical, multi-movement sonata.

Chopin wrote 24 preludes, one in each key, and so did Rachmaninov. Scriabin too wrote preludes, many more than 24, but without the same

consistency in his choice of keys. With Debussy the prelude became an evocative character piece, often impressionistic in form. The accepted pattern of keys held no interest for him; his one bow to convention was the very number he wrote: 24, divided into two books (1er Livre & 2me Livre) with twelve in each. As a group, the preludes display most of the features characteristic of Debussy's music in general. But why the title "prelude"? Debussy did not wish these piano works to be regarded as programme music as such, that is, as depictions of concrete things. On the other hand, he wanted to give the listener an indication of the source of his inspiration. Therefore, after each prelude he noted a title or a characteristic sentence. What is important is that the title is placed *after* the piece - and in brackets. Debussy, then, is not demanding anything of his listener: this is how this piece is to be heard - but offering him something: this is how it *can* be heard.

Préludes bk. I (1910)

- Danseuses de Delphes* (Dancing Women of Delphi). An inspiration from antiquity, a cool, static piece evoking chaste temple dancers in calm, solemn and dispassionate movement.
- Violes* (Sails). An impressionistic depiction of the sight of bright sails and the sea.
- Le vent dans la plaine* (The wind in the plain). A toccata-like, rapidly-flowing movement, interrupted by violent *forte* outbursts.
- "Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir"* (Sounds and perfumes in the evening air. Ch. Baudelaire). A light and fleeting piece, exquisite of harmony and melody.

- Les collines d'Anacapri* (The hills of Anacapri). Distant tones introduce this almost cunning and folksong-like piece.
- Des pas sur la neige* (Footsteps in the snow). Music of almost desperate melancholy.
- Ce qu'a vu le vent d'Ouest* (What the west wind saw). A stormy and tumultuous depiction of sea and wind.
- La fille aux cheveux de lin* (The girl with the flaxen hair). A peerlessly graceful and supple "portrait".
- La sérénade interrompue* (The interrupted serenade). An impression from Spain, marked "quasi guitarra" at the beginning. The lover's serenade to his chosen one is interrupted again and again.
- La Cathédrale engloutie* (The submerged cathedrale). Based on the Breton legend of the town Ys, which sunk beneath the sea.
- La danse de puck* (Puck's dance). A lively, carefree sketch; all movement.
- Minstrels* (Minstrels). A picture of different moods, drums and cries.

Préludes bk. II (1913)

- Brouillards* (Mists). Music made shimmering and uncountured by the use of polytonality, that is, the simultaneous use of a number of different keys.
- Feuilles mortes* (Dead leaves). A gentle and melancholy reflection of autumn. Pensive, almost dreaming.
- La puerta del Vino*. Much of Debussy's music bears witness to his fascination with Spain and things Spanish. Here is the famous gate to the Alhambra, painted in habanera rhythms. Inspiration came in the form of a

postcard from Manuel de Falla.

"Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses" ("Fairies are exquisite dancers"). Inspiration for this image of the dancing fairies, light of step and graceful of movement, came from a painting by the artist Arthur Rackham.

Bruyères (Heaths). A calm, expressive idyll. Cool and uncomplicated music.

"General Lavine" - *eccentric*. A display of humour and irony, this piece depicts the irresistibly charming and rather boisterous obliging music-hall figure.

La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune (Terrace of Moonlight Audiences). The imagination is given free rein in a saturated, nocturnal atmosphere.

Ondine. The water-spirit nymph is sketched in imaginative movements and patterns.

Hommage à S. Pickwick Esq. P.P.M.P.C. An amusing drawing of the redoubtable Mr. Pickwick, along the lines of General Lavine but of "heavier" irony. "God Save the King", which opens the piece, is a kind of motto.

Canope. Music of almost cosmic distance and calm depicts the ancient Egyptian canopic vase.

Les tierces alternées (Alternating thirds). This piece consists entirely of thirds which, alternating between the hands, form patterns of harmony and melody.

Feux d'artifice (Fireworks). The title says all that that needs to be said about this festive and virtuoso piece which, with a touch of the *Marseillaise*, rounds up this masterly cycle of exquisite and subtle piano works.

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Anker Blyme, born in 1925, may today be described as the aristocrat among Danish pianists. He is the supreme soloist with a natural virtuosity and yet ever in the service of the creative forces when he strives to deepen his understanding of the classical masters, or dissect the timbre of the various architectural layers in the works of the 20th century masters. Through his legendary co-operation with the cellist *Erling Blöndal Bengtsson* - one that has borne fruit in the form of recordings of the complete works for cello and piano of Beethoven - and his vigorous partnership with the pianist and composer *Niels Viggo Bentzon*, Anker Blyme has demonstrated his mastery of a vast repertoire ranging between form and tone, rhythmic pulse and dynamic structure.

The basic musicality that marks Blyme's art has been carefully fostered since he as a child developed his boy alto and sense of tone to soloist level under teachers *Agnete Zacharias* (voice) and *Mogens Wöldike* (the conductor of the renowned *Copenhagen Boys' Choir*). Recordings are still to be found of Anker Blyme's alto ringing alongside the tenor *Aksel Schiøtz* - one of many artists whose keyboard partner he was later to become.

Blyme furthered his piano studies with the distinguished teacher *Henrik Knudsen* at the Royal Danish Academy of Music, where he later in life, after thirteen years of teaching at the conservatories in Odense and Århus, was to become a teacher and professor (1974). He made his début as a soloist in 1945, having also studied the violin to a level which enabled him to undertake serious solo parts. After spending some time furthering his training in France,

Blyme set about making a name for himself in the Danish musical establishment. More than anything else he became the rebel among Danish pianists - the one you could always turn to with a contemporary piece others might decline. This had the effect that even when Blyme was playing impretentiously, the result was taken seriously by connoisseurs of the avant-garde, and this in turn provoked Blyme - who since his boyhood had been everywhere, from Palestrina to Stravinsky - to become less extraverted towards his following. On the other hand, he was more and more frequently to be encountered as a writer, commenting topical subjects with a sharp pen.

Still, it is against a background of centuries of music, and his own century's practice, that Anker Blyme has distilled his artistic attitudes and focussed our attention on the masters who turned the young rebel into an aristocrat.

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The piano used for this recording is a specially built Steinway Model B belonging to Anker Blyme.

Booklet back: Claude Debussy (1862-1918)
Painting by Marcel André Bachet (1984)

Booklet front: Photo Kjeld H. Kjeldsen.
Design Eva E.S. Povelsen.

Anker Blyme on Danacord:

Ludwig van Beethoven:
Complete works for cello and piano with Erling Blöndal Bengtsson, cello.
DAC OCD 333-334 (2 CD)

Bernhard Lewkovich:
4 Piano Sonatas. Dance Suites 1 & 2
DAC OCD 475

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Suono da Bardo. Works for Piano
DAC OCD 502





DACOCOD 505

STEREO **ADD**

Total playing time
 74:01

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 Torben Schousboe

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 Jesper Buhl

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